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THE

NEAR-EASTERN PROBLEM

AND THE

PAN-GERMAN PERIL

BY

VLADIMIR YOVANOVITCH

LONDON :

WATTS & CO.,

17, JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.

1909



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BY

VLADIMIR YOVANOVITCH

AUTHOR OF "THE SERBIAN NATION AND THE EASTERN QUESTION,"

"THE EMANCIPATION AND UNITY OF THE SERBIAN NATION,"

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PREFACE

It is a dictate of justice that, in endeavouring to arrive at a solution of the Near-Eastern Problem, all due consideration should be given to the feelings and claims of those whom this problem most concerns.

In order to judge how the present situation in the Near-East appears to the minds of its peoples, and how it affects their interests and feelings, it is necessary to consult the opinions and collect the statements of those who live among and understand these peoples.

It may therefore be hoped that it will not be unacceptable to the English-speaking public to hear a Serbian voice regarding the Near-Eastern Problem.

V. Y.

Belgrade, May 10th, 1909.

THE NEAR-EASTERN PROBLEM AND THE PAN-GERMAN PERIL

I.

THE AUSTRIAN ANNEXATION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

THAT Austria meditated the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina might no doubt have been foreseen. But it was less easy to foresee that she would appropriate the two provinces for her own benefit by the most direct methods, without the consent of their inhabitants being obtained or even asked, and in such a manner as to render international law nugatory.

In adhering to the London Treaty of 1871, Austria bound herself to respect the essential principle of international law that no Power can liberate itself from the engagements of a treaty, nor modify its stipulations, without the consent of all the Powers who were parties to it. Being under such an obligation, Austria was entrusted, by the Berlin Congress of 1878, with the mission of occupying and administering Bosnia and Herzegovina, after having agreed to a secret treaty with Turkey (July 13th, 1878), by which her mission was to be considered only as a temporary one.

Who has ever pleaded more eloquently than Austria in

favour of unwavering faith in treaties, of the balance of power, of the concert of Europe, and of universal peace?

Europe was lulled to sleep by the comfortable assurance that Austria was determined honestly to fulfil her treaty engagements, and to shrink from no difficulty when the diplomatic basis upon which the balance of power and the peace of Europe repose was at stake.

Yet it can be truly said that it was Austria who has failed to hold sacred her international engagements, who has failed to do what she honestly could do with the object of preserving the balance of power and the peace of Europe.

Indeed, in what way could Austria do more to weaken faith in treaties, to disturb the balance of power, to undermine peace, to derange the machinery of diplomacy, and to drive Europe to despair, than by having, single-handed, in contempt of international treaties, and by no right whatever, attempted to extend her sphere of sovereignty to Bosnia and Herzegovina?

Surprised at first by this violent breach of faith, Europe has awakened to the stern reality that her interests and those of Austria are at variance, and consequently that the act of the Berlin Congress, enabling Austria to occupy and administer Bosnia and Herzegovina, was a great political error, which needs to be repaired.

The credit obtained by Austria, behind a mask of diplomatic innocence, could last only till it became apparent that she has her own interests, not those of Europe, in view. Unmasked, Austria affords an opportunity to ascertain her distinctive qualities as they really are.

II.

AUSTRIA AS SHE REALLY IS

AUSTRIA figures among the members of the European family as a body which is not pervaded by one principle of vitality and sentiment. In fact, it is an assemblage of distinct elements, none of which has any strong sympathy with the rest, and the association of which has produced only pain and disgust. Within the memory of man Austria had tried all possible means of artifice and violence to control, and, as opportunity offered, to absorb, fragments of foreign nationalities. She was involved in every European quarrel and complication, and had her vision of universal dominion, obeying a principle according to which a State must, in order to prolong its life, absorb other States. But all the policies and tactics which she used as her means of domination, founded upon conquests and enforced annexations, have ended in making her a composite parasite, a body without cohesion and power, a mere agglomeration of smaller and larger fragments of different races, the bulk of which dwell outside it. In a State so constituted everything tends to become isolated and particular. The whole may be compared to a nebulous substance with each of its atoms gravitating round its own nucleus. The animosity of the Germans against the Slovenians, the Italians, the Roumanians, and even against the Magyars, is so great as to render futile all calculations regarding the consolidation of a monarchy containing so many conflicting elements of a very irreconcilable character,

from varieties of race to differences of ideas and traditions. Such a monarchy must find it extremely difficult to preserve its own balance ; it is practically impossible that it should furnish a real support to the balance of power in Europe.

Thirty years ago Europe dreaded nothing so much as to see the Great Slovenian Power master in Constantinople. The red spectre of Panslavism haunted a certain school of diplomatists, and a tissue of inventions was repeated countless times by Austro-Hungarian politicians and journalists, in order to give at their pleasure a shape and form to the imagined "Panslavistic Peril." Whenever any of the Slovenian peoples, either in Austria-Hungary or in the Balkan Peninsula, manifested self-consciousness, claiming the right to a free existence and self-government, such a manifestation was commented on as having issued from a Panslavistic source. This, however, was merely for the purpose of casting suspicion on the liberal aspirations of the Slovenian peoples, and to make them an object of infinite terror to other European nations, who might, it was assumed, have reason to fear lest the balance of power should be shaken and destroyed by a terrible apparition of "Panslavism." The idea of a "Great Serbia" was particularly combated by the Austro-Hungarian intriguers, under the pretext that its realisation would not fail to put a dangerous opportunity into the hands of Russia as the great Slovenian Power.

Such were the circumstances in which the Berlin Congress of 1878 considered the services of Austria against Russia as invaluable, and, reposing trust in the good faith of the dual monarchy, handed over Bosnia and Herzegovina to her care, in order to guard the Near East against Russian aggression.

Having thus gained a foothold in the Balkans, Austria

developed a policy of fostering and perpetuating rivalry and animosity among the Balkan States for the purpose of preventing all combinations in the Peninsula which might force her to abandon the scheme of a gradual expansion towards the East. Evidence for such an Austrian policy is to be found in the fact that the dual monarchy exerted itself in raising the question of Macedonia, in order to make this province an apple of discord between the Serbs, the Bulgarians, and the Greeks. The fact that the Serbo-Bulgarian dispute of 1885 was decided by a fratricidal war is to be explained by the influence which Austria exercised on King Milan, by virtue of the secret Convention to which he had agreed with her in 1881.

At a later period Austria has, in a manner not over-scrupulous, supported the Bulgarian action in Macedonia at the expense of the Serbs, and contrary to the stipulations of the Austro-Serbian secret Convention of 1881, by which she was bound to support the Serbian expansion in the direction of Macedonia. Recently Austria openly opposed the projected Customs Union between Serbia and Bulgaria, and insisted with feverish zeal upon the rupture of the negotiations which tended to the realisation of such a union.

By effecting the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is a real partition of Turkey, Austria was evidently endeavouring to stop the new reform movement in that country, and to render impossible the regeneration of the Ottoman Empire.¹ In order to rend in pieces the various elements which might possibly combine at some future date to lay the foundation of a great self-supporting confederacy of free nations in the Near East, Austria does not cease to sow the seeds of discord and hostility among them,

¹ It would appear, from the recent military insurrection in Constantinople that considerable success has, so far, attended the Austrian efforts.

cherishing systematically the religious, territorial, and other questions which inevitably divide them.

Austria affects zeal for the development of culture under her rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In reality no such consolation is vouchsafed to the two provinces. In Europe much ignorance exists about Austrian rule in the occupied provinces. Ready acceptance is given to the statements of occasional and superficial visitors, which statements can only be said to betray a misconception of the facts. Thirty years are a short interval in the reckoning of history; but thirty years of Austrian occupation and administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been long enough to prove that Austrian rule is not leading the peoples forward steadily in the right path.

It is not to be denied that Austria has done something for the development of material culture in the two provinces. But, in truth, her care for them is prompted only by self-interest. Instead of meriting the love of the peoples by securing them liberty and the efficient administration of justice, by countenancing virtue and discouraging vice, she has entered upon the policy of exploiting the occupied provinces by using their resources for her own purposes. An entire system of concessions and monopolies of industry and trade was organised for the benefit of the Austro-Hungarian traders and manufacturers, especially of the Catholic and Jewish parts of them, but at the cost of the natives.

Every friend of truth and justice should realise that Austria's rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not for the benefit of the inhabitants themselves. As the Austrian administration is concerned mainly with draining the financial resources of the occupied provinces, it troubles itself little about the question of their higher progress.

Everything possible is not done for the physical, intellectual, and moral improvement of the peoples. The system of public education is stationary, and even retrograde, when compared to that of Serbia.¹ Austria has done nothing to aid the solution of the agrarian difficulties, or the revision of the system of taxation. The rights and interests of the nation are not protected in a spirit of justice. The Bosnians and Herzegovinians are domineered over as if they were conquered enemies. In reality, the history of Austrian domination over them is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having as a direct object the establishment of an absolute despotism. Even at this time the Serbian journalists are illegally persecuted and punished for defending their national rights and interests. Large bodies of Austro-Hungarian troops are quartered among the people, and protected by a mock-trial from punishment for any crime they commit against the natives. As a consequence, much needless suffering has been endured without redress. Petitions in the most humble terms have been answered only by repeated injuries. The Austrian rule ignores justice and right, and, so far from being humane, is frequently oppressive. The Bosnians and Herzegovinians would be far better off if this rule were now withdrawn from them.

The history of the Serbs who had emigrated to Austria from Turkey, in the last decade of the seventeenth century, presents examples which testify that an ill-wind never ceases to blow evils on the Serbs in Austria, and consequently that the Bosnians and Herzegovinians can expect no good for their own future from the Austrian annexation.

¹ See *L'Annexion de la Bosnie et la Question Serbe*. Par Jovan Zwiytitch, Paris.

According to the treaties of 1690, 1691, and 1695, the Serbs in Austria should retain their national autonomy in domestic affairs; they should govern themselves, and regulate independently their domestic questions, and especially that of public worship and national education. Though the Serbs have rendered to the House of Hapsburg services which were instrumental in maintaining the existence of the Empire, Austria continues systematically to violate their national rights, whether the fulfilment of the treaties containing the guarantees of these rights depends directly on the Emperor, or on the mercy of the Hungarian Diet. All the forms of perfidy and force are unscrupulously employed in a great measure by the authorities in order to compel the Serbs to renounce not only their national autonomy, but even their own religion, their own language and national identity. The right to a free expression of opinion on political questions is violated not only in the person of journalists and publicists, but in that of national representatives. The system of public education, as well as the development of commercial and financial resources, and even the construction of the railroads, are all calculated to support the German and Magyar supremacy over the Slovenians and other races.

It would be tedious to recapitulate here all the Austro-Hungarian attempts directed against the political and individual liberty and the national rights and interests of the Serbs. The duplicity of the Austro-Hungarian policy is sufficiently known to render it unnecessary to show that all the treaty stipulations, by which the national rights of the Serbs were guaranteed, have remained a dead letter.

The trial of fifty-three Serbs in Agram for "high treason," charged with participation in Pan-Serb propaganda, on the deposition of one Naslich, a Croatian agent,

paid by the Austro-Hungarian authorities to compromise the adherents of the Serbo-Croatian coalition, is the most recent testimony that in no phase of the history of Austro-Hungarian dominion over the Slovenians is to be found a lofty moral principle guiding the destinies of peoples.

A true liberal and democratic transformation of Austria would require the abolition of every sort of exclusive privilege and the establishment of a confederacy of free nations like that of Switzerland, or that of the United States of America. The realisation of the equality of duty and right would reconcile the different nationalities to the necessity of living together. But Austria is not showing any disposition to realise such a transformation of its political system. She continues to maintain a condition in which the rivalries and animosities of the races are excited and continued so as to use some of them as tools for the enslavement of others.

The rudeness, indelicacy, and lawlessness of the manner in which Austria carried out the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina shows that she is now what she has always been. The mandate of a temporary occupation and administration does not create a right to the annexation, which ought to be effected only by the free will of the peoples operating by means of a plebiscite. It is generally known that not one of the neighbouring peoples has ever shown the least wish for an incorporation with Austria. On the contrary, all these peoples have been, and always will be, opposed to such an incorporation; while the fragments of different races, brought together under the Austrian yoke, do not cease to show a permanent tendency to unite with the neighbouring kindred races to form one nation. Such a tendency is to be discerned not only in the sentiment of nationality ever living in the heart of the Austro-Hungarian

Slovenians, but also in the fact that the Austrian Germans themselves, and even many German deputies in the Reichstag, are manifestly actuated by a similar spirit in the development of Pan-Germanism.

If Austria claims a force of more than two millions of well-armed, well-equipped, and well-disciplined troops, it should not be forgotten that a modern state ought to be something better than an army or a camp. As to the numerical strength of the army, the catastrophe of Sadowa showed that such a strength on paper does not correspond with the effective strength of the forces. On the other hand, it is well known that about two-thirds of the Austro-Hungarian army consist of Slovenians. Now, will Austria constrain these Slovenians to fight in favour of the extension of her own sphere of sovereignty over the neighbouring Slovenian peoples, or to bear arms against their Slovenian brothers, to become their executioners or themselves to fall by their hands? Such an injustice might be paralleled in the most barbarous ages, but it is totally unworthy of a civilised nation. The sympathies of the Slovenians of Austria-Hungary are resolutely with the neighbouring Slovenian States, and the chances of internal troubles in the dual monarchy, in the event of war, ought to be estimated in order to have a just idea of the state of affairs. All the efforts of Austria to maintain her position might be made in vain; success would be possible for her only when German arms were at her disposal.

To appreciate the moral standard of the Austro-Hungarian system of policy, the comments of the Austro-Hungarian press upon the object and methods of the Austro-Turkish agreement, relative to Bosnia and Herzegovina, must be borne in mind. These comments, in pointing out that Turkey has agreed to accept the offer of

Austria to pay £2,500,000 for "Crown properties" in the two provinces, and in declaring that the question regarding the annexation of these provinces by Austria has been definitely settled by such an agreement, are indeed so outspoken as to raise the question whether the Bosnians and Herzegovinians have been destined to be dealt with as if, for the purpose of the Austro-Turkish arrangement, they were mere chattels. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century the institution of slavery and the slave-trade had been solemnly condemned by the whole of Europe, at the Congress of Vienna and that of Verona. Now, in the first quarter of the twentieth century, there are politicians and diplomatists in Vienna and Budapest whose views and statements upon the Austro-Turkish arrangement tend towards the application of the principles of slavery to the inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the form of the sale of the "Crown properties," which is an actual transfer of territory from one Power to the other.

It ought to be remembered that the true significance of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian question lies in the inalienable rights of the Bosnians and Herzegovinians as men. These rights should protect them against any barbarism which would treat them as things, or chattels, to be sold with the "Crown properties," as if they were integral parts of these properties, or a flock of sheep, to be bought and transferred from one master to another.

It is the highest wisdom of a civilised nation to follow right, not from selfish calculations, but because right is right—because the human society has a standard within itself which, as an absolute and important rule of self-respect, teaches respect for others. Unfortunately, the appetite of Austria for absorbing Bosnia and Herzegovina is so great that her politicians and diplomatists seem to be

unable to discern such a moral standard, and to act up to it. They discourse on the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina as if they were not born and brought up in a civilised country of the twentieth century, in which the life of nations ought to be a progressive approximation towards doing right for the sake of right. In opposing club-law to the inalienable rights of man, they furnish examples of the total absence of the sense of duty relative to other peoples. They act in accordance with the moral standard of the Red Indian; they are disposed to dismember and denationalise a nation with the same cynicism and unscrupulousness with which the Red Indian is ready to take the scalps of his enemies.

Though Austria shares a relatively high material well-being, she is less civilised in her methods of life and conduct than many peoples of a far lower level of civilisation, but among whom we may look for a higher growth of moral ideas, of truth and falsehood, of justice and humanity.

III.

THE "DRANG NACH OSTEN," OR THE PAN-GERMAN PERIL

THE balance of power is generally recognised and adopted as a principle of the public law of Europe. The entire system which modern European States constitute may be considered to be equilibrated as long as no single Power has an undue preponderance over its neighbours.

Now, the Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is itself sufficient proof that treaty engagements do not yet possess an absolutely binding character, and the question arises, how to secure a just and stable balance of power in Europe, where the international treaties, which form the public law, can be torn up at the pleasure of a single State as soon as it finds opportunity to aggrandise its territory and power, and to diminish those of its neighbours.

To see things as they really are, it is necessary to concentrate attention upon the course of the evolution of the existing internal forces and external relations of the nations. In doing so, it will be perceived that the Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina affects interests which extend far beyond the Near East.

These interests are to be discerned in the desire of each European State to secure for itself a share in the immense wealth which is flowing into Europe by means of the Levant trade and commerce. Its geographical position has destined the Balkan Peninsula to be a natural thoroughfare between the East and the West, and Constantinople to rise

to the high importance of a centre of the world's commerce. To conquer this great sea-port and the Balkan countries has been the principal object of all great military and naval Powers coveting the lion's share in the rich Levant trade. A barrier to such an ambition of the great military and naval powers is constituted by the jealousy which they feel of each other's aggrandisement, and with which they have for centuries continued to guard the great routes by which the Levant trade reaches them.

The same reasons which determined European Powers, in 1878, to oppose obstacles to Russia on its way to Constantinople, and to oblige her to abandon the greater part of the advantages she had won in the war of 1878, may now be at work to draw the European Powers together, with a view of resisting the attempt of Austria to alter the order of things which was created in the Near East by the Berlin Treaty of 1878.

Indeed, by the flagrant violation of this Treaty last October Austria has undeceived Europe, which reposed confidence in the assurance given at the Berlin Congress of 1878, that this monarchy "never sought to disturb the interests of any one at any point in the world."

In these days the situation of Europe is, in fact, widely different from what it was before the Berlin Congress. It is now plain that the genius of the Slovenian race is not aggressive in a warlike sense, and consequently that there is no real necessity to defend the balance of power and the peace of Europe against any "Pan-Slavistic Peril."

The economic interests of the hour are paramount, and the real peril against which the Europe of the twentieth century must fight is the *Drang nach Osten*—in other words, the tendency of the Germans towards universal economic supremacy.

In reality a fierce industrial and commercial rivalry subjects modern States to international strain and struggle along the whole line, and the vital point at issue is the question of economic supremacy. Nations rise to the rank of "Great Powers" by virtue of their industries and their relative shares in the wealth created by the world's trade, and they remain powerful as long as they maintain their economic position. The changes in the distribution of economic forces are among the most potent agents for bringing about political transformations.

Being superior to other maritime Powers, and having acquired the position of commercial and naval primacy in the world, Great Britain must fight against the competition of her naval and economic rivals, among whom the German Empire seems to challenge most seriously Britain's disproportionate share in the world's trade and British supremacy at sea.

The important fact is that the aspirations of Germany take the same direction towards the East as those of the colonising expeditions of the German race from Carlo-vingian times. Ascendancy on the sea being the great ambition of the German Empire, this Power endeavours to grasp the supreme position on the lines of communication that stretch from the Baltic and the North seas southward to the Adriatic and the Ægean seas, and westward to the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. For this purpose Germany continues the rapid creation of her naval force. In exercising her influence on Austria, under the pretext of keeping her loyal to the Triple Alliance, Germany will not fail to impress on her the duty of increasing and developing her naval forces.

Since the catastrophe of Sadowa, Austria depends practically upon Germany, and for all international intents and

purposes is under German control. Though nominally independent, she remains in fact a vice-royalty of the German Empire. For certain purposes the two monarchies may be regarded as one, the two policies and two armies as working for the same ends. The Austrian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was due to German initiative; the annexation of the two provinces by Austria was energetically supported by Germany. What the result of the Austrian appropriation of these provinces will be it is impossible to predict. But, if the salient features of the situation are examined, the trend of events may be perceived, and the incentive to the action of Austria found in the German eagerness for expansion towards the Adriatic and the Ægean Sea. Every step of the Austrian advance in this direction will serve to promote the interests of Germany.

When a comparison is made between the area and population of the Balkan States and the Dual Monarchy the figures stand thus :—

	AREA.	POPULATION.
Balkan States	519,060 sq. km.	.. 22,200,000
Austria-Hungary (with Bosnia and Herzegovina)	624,851 sq. km.	.. 47,700,000

These figures represent the numerical strength of the two elements. But the population ought to be weighed as well as counted; and it must be acknowledged that the Dual Monarchy is not only superior to the Balkan States in population and area, but that she represents a greater factor of organised economic forces.

The Balkan countries, by reason of their inferior culture, naturally offer a field for the consumption of wares manufactured by the more developed industrial States. Europe, especially Western Europe, has considerable interests in the Balkan countries, in which the English and French

industrial and commercial ascendancy was not long ago unchallenged. Before the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina Austria-Hungary was the weakest of the industrial States, and suffered much from the English and French competition on the Balkan markets. But, in grasping the position of a Balkan State, the Dual Monarchy took the western Balkan countries into her own economic sphere of influence, and from that time the Austro-Hungary traders and manufacturers have been gaining ground on the Balkan markets at the cost of those of England and of France. Still young and weak in all branches of production, the Balkan States are unable to cope with Austria, whose exports into the Balkan countries now amount to 276 million crowns (£11,500,000).

The annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot but aggrandise the influence of Austria in the Balkan countries. The very first result of it will probably be the conclusion of commercial treaties between the Dual Monarchy and the Balkan States, calculated to monopolise the Balkan markets for the merchandise of Austria-Hungary, whose economic policy, like that of Germany, is protectionist, tending to secure the home markets for native industry and agriculture, while maintaining as far as possible openings for export. The Balkan States, nominally free, will be bound by treaties enabling Austria to monopolise the trade and industries of the Peninsula.

It is not absolutely necessary for Austria to plan a direct conquest of the Balkan countries. It will answer her purpose to establish a Balkan *Customs Union* (Zollverein) as a protection against the invasion of markets within the Union by foreign products and manufactured goods. At the head of such a Union Austria would hold the predominant position in the Balkan Peninsula, and would

consequently acquire a most important means of exploiting the smaller Balkan States, as well as of exercising pressure and influence on them in introducing into Balkan affairs the idea of *hegemony* and *alliance*, like that which Philip of Macedonia developed towards the Hellenic States.

Taking advantage of the needs, weakness, and want of moral force of the Dual Monarchy, Germany would exercise a control over the combined Austro-German naval forces, for the purpose of becoming superior to the other sea Powers of the world.

Should Bulgaria eventually join Germany and Austria in a naval league, the situation would become more complicated. Having access to two seas, Bulgaria, supported by Germany and Austria, would endeavour to develop her naval forces, in order to realise her aspiration to arise as a sea Power with two coast-lines.

The advancement of the Austro-German interests in the Near East would be evidently full of danger, not only for the future of the Balkan States, which would be liable to successive encroachments and subjected to the process of systematic Germanisation, but for Europe itself, which would be compelled to grant free play to the growing sea power of Germany, and to place in her hands opportunities for occupying the harbours, coasts, and seaports of the Peninsula, of opening them to commerce or closing them, as expediency might demand.

If, under more enlightened control, German industry succeeds in embarking upon a more general manufacturing system according to scientific methods in utilising its supplies of cheaper labour, and in thrusting its products at a lower price upon the world's markets, it may exercise a profound influence upon other nations, and aid Germany in entering upon a new era of power and greatness.

It is difficult to say to what extent the interests and destinies of Europe would be affected by the influence of Germany in the process of her advancement towards the East. But, should she once reach the Adriatic, the Ægean, and the Mediterranean Seas, and extend her sphere of influence upon the great centres of the Levant trade, the predominance of German interests in the East would undoubtedly become a most serious menace to other European nations, and would inevitably lead to the re-opening of the whole Eastern question.

IV.

THE SOLIDARITY OF THE INTERESTS OF THE EUROPEAN NATIONS

THE interest of Europe in general is to prevent the expansion towards the East of any military Power aiming at the supreme control of the waterways of the world, and at universal economic supremacy. Such an expansion would obviously endanger the naval and commercial development of the other great Powers, and would be inimical to European peace and the general progress of civilisation. It is therefore impossible for Europe not to be alarmed by any change of the conditions which would affect the balance of power.

Great Britain being especially interested in the preservation of her lines of communication on the ocean route to India and the Indian seas, the balance of maritime power is naturally anxiously watched in London. To secure sea communication between the ports of the North Sea and those of the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, Germany must sooner or later exert herself in opening for her own navies a free passage through the Channel and the Strait of Gibraltar. How Germany is prepared to take advantage of every favourable circumstance which could serve her for such a purpose was demonstrated by the fact that she hastened to profit by the defeats which British arms suffered in South Africa, and to resolve on doubling the strength of her fighting fleets. The fact that the German Reichstag has recently passed without discussion the second reading

of the Naval Estimates is a proof of Germany's determination to develop and increase her naval forces on a scale enabling her to rise to the supreme position on the sea. As the sea may almost be termed a British element and as the ocean trade is an inexhaustible source of British wealth, it is obvious that Great Britain will omit nothing that she can honestly and with a safe conscience do for the purpose of averting the danger which her sagacity must perceive to be real, and of maintaining her naval supremacy.

The interests of France and other Atlantic and Mediterranean Powers may be identified with British interests in so far as they also must secure the access of their commercial navies to Constantinople by free navigation on the Mediterranean and through the Dardanelles and Bosphorus, as well as the free use of the Suez Canal and the Eastern seas. The German tendency to expansion towards the Adriatic and the Mediterranean would create a necessity for all these Powers to augment their naval forces and to maintain the full efficiency of their fighting fleets, in order to resist every attempt of Germany to encroach upon their own spheres of influence.

The interests of Russia may be in entire accordance with those of Western Europe in opposing obstacles to German ascendancy in the Ægean and the Mediterranean seas, which would endanger the freedom and security of navigation in the Black Sea and on the waterways between the East and the West.

The European Powers, when united by solidarity of interests in a collective action against the dangerous ambitions of Germany, would at any important crisis be able to maintain the positions which they had won for themselves as sea Powers ; while, as long as they remained isolated, they would be exposed to the danger of being

reduced to an inferior rank, or of being grouped under the hegemony of Germany as her subordinate allies.

The Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina having been planned as a step towards Austro-German expansion in the East, Europe has an interest and a motive in not allowing the great lines of communication and the strategical routes between the East and the West to come under Austro-German control. The great Powers, who signed the Berlin Treaty of 1878, are by its provisions entitled to consider the necessities of the situation created by the Austrian violation of this treaty, and to affirm the solidarity of the well-understood interests of all civilised nations as the surest guarantee for the safety of each.

V.

A DIPLOMATIC COMPROMISE

As the conditions which preceded the conclusion of the Berlin Treaty have undergone substantial modifications, a revision of this treaty has become an absolute necessity. Europe is confronted by the pressing necessity of taking such measures as might ensure respect to her will, and make it impossible that any single Power should ever again be in a condition to liberate itself from the treaty-engagements, or modify the treaty-stipulations, without first entering into friendly agreement with the contracting Powers, and obtaining their consent. It is all important for Europe, in the interests of general peace, to establish a just and stable balance of power, and to afford equitable and effective guarantees for the maintenance of the freedom and security of communication on the Eastern highways.

In the face of a problem so momentous, and at a moment when the lawless action of Austria was condemned by the public feeling of other States, it might surely have been possible to see the right path which lies before Europe. On the one side are justice, duty, honour, and treaty-faith, the rights of nations, the interests and the peace of Europe. On the other side, unprincipled ambitions, selfish calculations, and predatory instincts. How easy would it have been for Europe to settle the existing difficulties, and to secure the general peace, if it had been determined only to persevere in declining to sanction the action of Austria which it had formally disapproved.

The evil star of Europe willed that her diplomacy, after five months of dispute, felt constrained to abandon the right path, and, for bad or good reasons, to adopt the Austro-German views on the juridical status of Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to which policy is not morality, and is too often immorality; Europe and the European Areopagus are nothing, and Germany and her *imperium* are everything. Force being the dominant factor in the international relations of Europe, diplomacy determined to recognise the Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a *fait accompli*.

By a misconception of the facts, diplomacy assumed the Bosnian and Herzegovinian problem to be only a question of "territorial compensations" and "Serbian pretensions." The fallacy seems to lie in using these terms instead of the terms "the inalienable rights of the Bosnians and Herzegovinians as men," "the right of the Serbs to national existence and development," and "the guarantees of the balance of power and peace of Europe." By such sophistry diplomacy induced Europe to exert itself in compelling the Governments of Belgrade and of Cetinje to consider the question of the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina as closed by the Austro-Turkish arrangement; instead of bringing all its influence to bear on Austria to induce her to return to the path of duty, of justice, and of humanity, from which she has so markedly deviated.

It is one of the special cruelties of the existing system "might is right" that the weaker peoples are treated as if they were merely the property of the conquering Powers, or the implements of their exploitation to be sold and bought, and transferred from one master to another. The truth is that the general interests of Europe and of mankind are intimately concerned in putting down such a practice,

which, viewed in the light of justice and humanity, appears to be merely a glaring and dreadful political crime.

By the recognition of the Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Europe has allowed its first line of defence to become weakened, and the Pan-German peril to be emphasised. And the Anglo-German naval controversy gives ground for supposing that this peril is approaching.

The success of Austria makes it certain that nations cannot rely on the sacredness of treaties. And even setting international ethics aside, it remains obvious that it would be wise to avoid everything which could plausibly be represented as a European sanction of the breach of treaty-faith. When it was first known that Austria had promulgated the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Near East was already in flame. There was a wave of protest from the concerned peoples. In Serbia and Montenegro, whose interests were threatened by the attitude of Austria, military preparations were at once made for eventualities. Meetings attended by many thousand citizens were held at which resolutions were unanimously carried condemning the action of Austria in the most energetic terms, and thanking the great Powers for having refused to recognise her enforced annexation of the two countries. At the same time, the meetings declared the willingness of the peoples to undergo every sacrifice for the defence of the Serbian rights and interests, and urged greater energy and firmness on the part of the Governments. The patriots mutually pledged to one another their fortunes, their honour, and their lives, with a reliance on the protection of Divine Providence.

As the hope of securing a real and sincere respect for international law and justice was by no means quenched

in the Near East, it is easy to understand that the sanction of the Austrian breach of the faith of treaties cannot produce there any good impression. Such a sanction can never possess that moral authority which would be attached to a decision affirming the solidarity of the interests of all civilised nations, and evincing a true-hearted determination to preserve the European balance of power in the interests of general peace. It may be considered as a new injustice, which is calculated only to render all hope of remedy vain, and to deepen the irritation of the injured peoples. Disappointment will embitter a whole generation, and, in the end, may impress on them the duty of procuring justice for themselves where it is not otherwise obtainable.

How frail are the diplomatic arrangements which seemed to assure the peace of the Near East by recognising the Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is demonstrated by the recent reactionary movement in Constantinople in favour of the Scheriat law or the Koran *régime*.

VI.

THE SERBIAN RIGHTS AND INTERESTS

To secure order, peace, and prosperity to Europe, and to avoid conflicts which would disturb the equilibrium of the Balkan States, it is necessary to oppose such a preponderance of any Power as might end in extending its own sphere of sovereignty to the whole of the Balkan Peninsula, and in closing to other nations the valley of the Danube and the great routes of the Levant trade and commerce.

By the breach of the faith of treaties Austria has proved herself not to be actuated by any sense of duty which would ensure the confidence of other States in her proceedings. She was, it is true, checked for the moment by the diplomatic intervention of Europe; but, after her success in annexing definitely Bosnia and Herzegovina, nobody can tell to-day what she may do to-morrow. Peace or war ought not to depend on the caprice of a single Power.

Serbia and Montenegro are exposed more than other Balkan States to the evils and dangers that may result from the capriciousness of Austria. The right of the two Serbian States to national existence and development being founded not only on the universal principle of natural justice, but also on the support of international law, they are entitled to look for the strongest security against a powerful neighbour hostile to their national development, and tending only to territorial aggrandisement at their expense.

In such a position the Serbian patriots are obliged to

declare frankly and openly that peace in the Balkan Peninsula can be secured only by such a condition of Bosnia and Herzegovina as would be likely to bring about a durable pacification of the two provinces, and to prevent the recurrence of events which would create an intolerable situation, the continuance of which they could not admit.

The population of Bosnia, a former Serbian Kingdom, and of Herzegovina, a former Serbian Grand Duchy, consists of Serbs, who in language, traditions, poetry, and literature, as well as in physical features and in customs and manners, claim to be the purest representatives of the Serbian nation. The melodious dialect of the Herzegovinians and Bosnians typifies the highly cultivated Serbian language. It possesses a rich oral literature, abounding in popular legends, and a great variety of highly poetical compositions tending to idealise the Serbian spirit. The ideal of this spirit is a national hero distinguished by the virtues and qualities which alone enable him to fulfil his patriotic mission, in spite of innumerable dangers and temptations, and in whom every Serb would recognise the noblest representative of his nationality.

By the Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina the number of the Serbs living in the Dual Monarchy will be doubled, and will amount to about one-third of the whole Serbian people. In the face of such a fact Serbia and Montenegro will be forced to choose the alternative of two absolutely opposite policies: either to concentrate all their energies and forces in securing their right to national existence and development, or else to remain passive and risk being subjected to the process of Germanisation.

- To put themselves on their guard when Austria is evidently preparing to dispute their national rights and interests, and to make themselves secure from Austrian

absorption, is the first and holiest duty which Serbia and Montenegro owe to themselves and to their posterity.

The tendency of the latter half of the nineteenth century has been all in favour of the unification of peoples who speak the same language. Will the twentieth century deny the great idea according to which the men of one nationality should enjoy the right to a free and independent national existence and development? Will the German and Italian standard of self-respect acquiesce in Austria's making war on the Serbs and preventing the application to them of the principle which called into being the German Empire and the kingdom of Italy? Will Europe, at the very time when she acclaims and supports the establishment of the equality of right for all men, and of the growth of freedom in Turkey, allow the Serbian nation to be made a peace-offering on the altar of a diplomatic compromise which, by sanctioning Austria's rule of the Bosnians and Herzegovinians, will also enable her to effect successive extensions of her sphere of sovereignty to the other parts of the Serbian nation? Such a result would be an ill return for the streams of heroic blood which the Serbs for centuries shed in defending Christianity, liberty, and civilisation against the waves of Asiatic invasion, and in helping to make it possible for Europe to develop culture peacefully for the benefit of the whole of mankind.

Reason, experience, history, justice, duty, and honour all unite in the demand that brute force shall not be permitted to triumph over right and justice. And all for which the Serbs contend is their right to a free and independent national existence and development.

Being of pure Serbian blood, and perfectly conscious of their national origin, the Bosnians and Herzegovinians naturally wish to develop themselves according to the

guiding principle which human will carries within itself, and to the genius of their language and tradition. And it is only self-government that can with wisdom and propriety deal with this problem.

Austria was not entitled to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina without the leave of their inhabitants being asked and obtained. According to the natural and universal principles of justice and humanity, the Bosnians and Herzegovinians have a right to decide their own fate. They have a right to claim that the reasons for their political transformation should be submitted to their free vote. An expression of opinion upon their own future ought to be obtained from them by means of a plebiscite. In the existing state of things it must be insisted upon that complete liberty should be secured to them, under the control of Europe, to express their wishes upon their own destinies. The vote, given freely and independently of any Austrian influence, would best prove their tendency towards self-government, to which the laws of nature and the rights of man entitle them.

The Bosnians and Herzegovinians will never be disposed to consider themselves as the absolute property of any master. And it must be remembered that the interests of the whole Serbian nation, numbering about ten millions, are affected by the fate of Bosnia and Herzegovina. An annexation of the two provinces, against the will of their inhabitants and in derogation of the inalienable rights with which they as men are endowed by their Creator, can only have the significance of a partition of the Serbian nation, which would be like the dismembering of a living human being. Such an act of cruelty would be comparable to the greatest political crimes which stain the history of Europe, and which no diplomatic arrangements could justify before the supreme tribunal of mankind.

When the right of a people to a free national existence is gravely menaced, the paramount principle of self-preservation comes into play. If a country is forcibly annexed, it is clearly and at any time entitled to attempt to re-conquer its freedom. The interested people itself decides on the extent of provocation. Enforced annexation is an injustice, a crime, which no treaty formalities can rectify, and which can only sow the germs of hostility.

The emancipation of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Austrian yoke can only be a question of time. And it is generally known how the movement that led to the war of 1876 had its origin in Herzegovina. The Serbs have a territorial patriotism as citizens of the State; but they have also a sentiment of nationality, embracing the whole of that brave nation which, after many centuries of foreign domination, proved an unending and regenerating power in the glorious emancipation of Serbia at the beginning of the nineteenth century, astonishing both friends and enemies alike. That sentiment, as the frequent and brilliant examples of self-denial and heroism of the Montenegrins show, had for five centuries defended the national independence, exhibiting unflinching fortitude not only in the presence of an enemy vastly superior in numbers, but also in surmounting the enormous difficulties which are involved in poverty of the soil.

In the course of the last two centuries Austria has made every effort to destroy the Serbian nationality, but all in vain. Her forcible action has aroused all the powers of resistance in the injured people. The Serbian spirit, having vigorously roused itself, has produced among the Serbs the consciousness of national identity and solidarity. They have done, and will continue to do, everything possible to defend their national rights and interests.

It would be difficult to show what Austria has to gain by

opposing brute force to the inalienable rights of Bosnians and Herzegovinians as men. The highlanders of the annexed provinces are, like the Montenegrins, intrepid, strong, fleet, patient of cold, of hunger, and fatigue, accustomed to the use of weapons and to the sight of blood. They are marksmen, and well qualified for an interminable guerilla warfare. In political communities, as in the physical world, there may be an equality of momentum between unequal bodies, when the body which is inferior in weight is superior in velocity. In the highlands the greater mobility of untrained militia has often led to victories over regular troops. Mountaineers are invariably more mobile, and able to equalise the advantages of the superior modes of locomotion with which organisation and training have supplied regular troops. This is proved by numerous prodigies of Montenegrin valour, of which it may suffice to recall the following:—In the year 1613 10,000 Montenegrins defeated a Turkish army of 60,000 soldiers, commanded by Arslan Pasha. A body of only seventy Montenegrins dispersed in 1716 a Turkish army of 7,000 men. In 1768 3,000 Montenegrins repulsed the united Turkish forces of Bosnia, Albania, and Rumelia, amounting to 120,000 soldiers. In the year 1795 the army of the cruel Ali Pasha of Janina, though ten times superior in number to the forces of Montenegro, was entirely defeated by the Montenegrin arms. In the famous campaign of 1796 6,000 Montenegrins destroyed a Turkish army, amounting to about 30,000 men, under the command of Kara Mahmud Pasha. In the war of 1862 20,000 Montenegrins resisted an attack of 100,000 Turks. In 1869 Austria tried to force the Serbs of the district of Bocca di Cattaro to serve in the army, in opposition to the rights and privileges which they possessed *ab antiquo*. The insurrection in this district,

comprising only 70,000 inhabitants, cost Austria about £1,000,000; while the amount of discouragement suffered by the troops engaged cannot be estimated in money. In fact, the Austrian forces failed to subdue the insurrection. A small number of heroic mountaineers succeeded not only in resisting the army and navy of Austria during several months, but also in actually dictating the terms of reconciliation, and in convincing Austria that she could never be strong enough to destroy the sentiments of justice and nationality in the hearts of the Serbs. Nobody who knows the sensitive jealousy with which the Serbs watch their national rights and interests can believe that the forcible annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be permanently successful in preserving peace.

To secure future peace in the Near East the Balkan States must be equitably balanced. The system which these States actually constitute cannot be regarded as evenly and justly balanced as long as Serbia remains remote from the sea coast, while all the other Balkan States have access to the sea. Serbia can develop her economic forces only when the export of her products and the import of necessary foreign commodities are facilitated. But up to now Serbia has been economically dependent on the States of the coast line. No sea-port was anywhere left to her. In reality this remoteness from the coast-line has led to the circumstance that foreign Powers obtained and exercised economic and political influences in Serbia. To free Serbia from such a cramped situation, as well as from the dangerous envelopment by which Austria threatens to suffocate her, a way to the sea ought to be opened to her in the direction in which the projected railway from the Danube to the Adriatic should be constructed, taking up Serbia and Montenegro on the way.

The access of Montenegro to the sea ought to be secured by the cession to the Principality of Spizza (in Dalmatia), which commands Antivary.

The Byzantine historians refer to the fact that the Serbs, after having settled in the Balkan Peninsula and come into contact with the sea, soon learnt the art of seamanship, and became a commercial nation. They were also able to carry agriculture and industry to a higher degree. They traversed the Adriatic and the Ægean seas, and reached even to the sea-ports of Asia Minor. In the twelfth century the commerce of the Serbian republic Dubrovnic (Ragusa) was expanding rapidly. This republic possessed a sea-born, sea-faring population, by whose energy she developed a carrying trade. She had concluded the series of commercial treaties with the Serbian Empire and the Italian republics, and opened factories, warehouses, and consulates in all important Eastern towns. As a commercial republic she remained for some time a considerable rival of Venice, and her flag floated in every climate and rode on every sea. Being at the zenith of her power, in the fourteenth century, the Serbian Empire did its best to advance the general progress of civilisation, and assisted the world's trade and commerce by conferring extensive privileges, not only upon natives, but also upon foreigners, especially the people of Venice, of Ragusa, and of Byzantium. The Serbs of Dalmatia have acquired, and continue to maintain, a reputation for skill and for wide experience in the navigation of the sea.

There can be no doubt that the Serbs of Serbia and Montenegro, if they come into contact with the sea, will succeed in creating new conditions of life, of culture, and of prosperity.

The interests of Serbia and Montenegro coincide with the

interests of Europe. In the present crisis in the Near East the two Serbian States have not been wanting in attention to Europe. They have given the best proof of their pacific disposition by insisting on respect for international treaties. Being seriously desirous of peace, they have appealed to the justice of Europe against the ruthless aggression of Austria upon the Serbian interests and rights. In inviting the necessary intervention of Europe they continued to avoid everything that might create any obstacle to the efforts of the Powers towards a peaceful solution of the difficulties in the Near East. They have undertaken the strongest measures to prevent a warlike movement; the civil and military authorities were ordered to use their utmost efforts to maintain public order and prevent all provocation. Finally, they have referred the Serbian case to the Great Powers, who had declined to recognise the Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Governments of the two Serbian States have accepted the counsels of these Powers. These facts ought to weigh, and, it is to be hoped, will weigh, heavily in the European Areopagus.

The Serbs are disposed to conform all their acts to the principles according to which the rights of nations, guaranteed by treaties, must be scrupulously and religiously respected.

Their sympathies are naturally with the new reform movement of Turkey, which is supported by Europe. As long as there is room for hope that the political transformation of the Ottoman Empire may be accomplished on the basis of the equality of duty and right without any distinction of race and religion, the Serbs who are living in that Empire are determined to do their best in co-operating to make the new constitutional *régime* successful. Turkey has

an opportunity, perhaps the last which may be offered, of retaining her place among the European Powers. If she neglects it, she will inevitably descend to a condition in which the prolongation of her dominion will become impossible.

The young and enterprising Serbian nation can be of great service to Europe by co-operating vigorously in presenting an effective barrier to the advances of any military and conquering power towards the East, in defending and maintaining the freedom and security of communication on the Eastern highways, and in developing and transplanting European culture and civilisation.

VII.

THE BALKAN CONFEDERACY

A BALKAN Confederacy in which each State would retain its individuality and sovereignty, and all would concentrate their forces in defending the common interests, would not only make the Balkan States stronger against outside attack, but, what is of far greater consequence, there would be much less danger of the industrial rivalry and political jealousy by which the success of these States is sometimes endangered.

A Balkan Confederacy with Constantinople and Salonika as free ports, and with a customs union between the Confederate States, would be favourable to the general progress of civilisation. By thus uniting in a confederacy the Balkan States would obey the law of self-preservation. The strength of the federation would indeed lie in the relative weakness of its members. Their success in establishing a confederacy would alarm nobody. It would not make it necessary for any Power to man another warship, or add another soldier to its army. The best means to secure the interests of Europe in the East is to assert the perpetual neutrality of the Balkan States, to guarantee their independence and the integrity and inviolability of their territories, and to support the establishment of a Balkan Confederacy.

Across the Balkan Peninsula lies the shortest way between the East and the West, and the interest of Europe is to maintain the Peninsula open to the world's trade and

commerce. All European States, having the right to a free development of national resources by commerce, and to a proportionate share in the Levant trade, have an interest in promoting the realisation of the idea of a Balkan Confederacy.

The well-understood interests of Austria and Germany themselves, as well as of all other European Powers, can in the East be no other than to secure free communication through the valley of the Danube and on the Black Sea, as one of the great lines of communication between Europe and Asia, and on the Ægean and the Mediterranean seas in the direction of the East.

A Balkan Confederacy neutralised, like Switzerland (in 1815) and Belgium (in 1839), supported by Europe, and maintaining full power of resistance, would constitute an effective bulwark against the spread of the influence of any military and conquering power desirous or capable of expansion towards the East, and would offer the best guarantee for the maintenance in freedom and safety of the great routes of the Levant trade, since a free circulation on these routes is necessary to the progressive development of the Balkan nations themselves.

It is high time that self-regarding ambitions and barbarian plans of conquest and partition of the Balkan countries by interested military Powers should be abandoned. Diplomatic arrangements based on the right of the stronger are like towers built on the slopes of a volcano. The subjection of the Balkan nations by the stronger Powers could but sow the seeds of permanent enmity between the oppressed and the oppressor, having for result a cruel slaughter of human beings, and hindering the general progress of civilisation.

The Balkan nations must, it would appear, wait till the

moral influence of Europe can be brought to bear upon its Governments, with a view to securing collective action against a practice disavowed by the principle of liberty, in which the rights and interests of the European nations are involved. According to this principle, the Balkan countries ought henceforth not to be considered as subjects for occupation and annexation by force, but ought to be secured against oppressive interposition, or the arbitrary control of their destinies by any foreign Power.

The economic interests and political necessities may sooner or later compel Europe to solve the hitherto insoluble Near-Eastern Problem by guaranteeing to the Balkan nations the right to their independence and a free development, so as to secure the Balkan territories for the Balkan nations themselves.

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